

Dear Family:

Your student is currently studying a chapter called “Citizenship Handbook” in social studies. The following information will give you some background and some activity suggestions to support him or her in this chapter.

The privileges and responsibilities of being a citizen of the United States are established in the Constitution. The provisions of the Constitution preserve individual rights and prevent the federal government from abusing its powers. The document sets up the three branches of government: the legislative branch, made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives; the executive branch; and the judicial branch, the ultimate court in the land.

One of the most important strengths of the Constitution is its capacity to be amended. The first ten amendments to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, outline the fundamental rights of all citizens, including such rights as the freedom to practice religion and the freedom of speech.

A basic principle of the Constitution is the separation of powers between federal and state or local governments. For example, such services as fire protection and school regulation are reserved for state governments, while national defense is governed by federal lawmakers.

The citizens of the United States enjoy many freedoms. In exchange, they are obligated to obey laws, pay taxes, defend the nation, and serve on juries. In addition, there are other responsibilities that good citizens practice, including serving the community, voting in elections, and helping to create a just society.

Use the following suggestions to help your student understand the important concepts of the chapter.

- Discuss the ways that you or people in your community participate in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Research and attend a public meeting of your town’s council or governing body. Then discuss the importance of such groups in the administration of your town.
- Help your student understand the different roles of state and federal government in your community. Point out that fire, police, recreation facilities, and public schools are all administered by the state. Look for the presence of federal officials, such as airport officials or post office workers. Discuss why it is important to separate the roles of the state and federal government.

Encourage your student to answer his or her questions about the content by reading the chapter or by doing independent research.

Sincerely,